

25 June 2020

Dear parents and carers,

Coronavirus has brought significant challenges to everyone in our city and I continue to be heartened by how the people of York have responded to the pandemic.

As a grandparent myself, I know from my own family just how difficult it is for parents who are juggling their day to day commitments with home schooling during these difficult times.

I want to thank each of you for all your hard work and dedication over the last few months. Many of you will have been providing home schooling alongside working, volunteering and caring commitments. I know that for many people this will have been incredibly challenging.

As a council, we appreciate all that you are doing by staying at home and home schooling. You will know that the support that you can give your children now will have a positive impact in the years ahead. But we also understand that many of you will be keen to see schools safely re-opening to all children and young people as soon as possible.

I want to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to work with schools and academies across York to help them open to all pupils, as soon as it is safe to do so.

Pupils are required to comply with the national social distancing guidance, which causes two significant problems for their schools. The first is simply having enough space to teach pupils while social distancing. The second is having enough teaching staff to work with a larger number of small groups of children. The Department for Education guidance advises a maximum class size of 15, so with these smaller groups,

schools do not have the numbers of staff they would need for all children to be at school.

Across the city, school teachers and support staff have been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support the most vulnerable children in York, along with the children of key workers, and to work towards welcoming more pupils as soon as possible. Their positivity and hard work to respond to rapidly changing national guidance has been incredible.

Our shared priority remains to open our schools to as many children and young people as possible, but only when it is safe to do so. We recognise the pressure that parents and carers are under, so we will continue to work with schools to help them to support their pupils and families over the coming months.

Over the next couple of weeks, we expect to receive guidance from the government about summer activities provision and we will share details with you as soon as we can. If you haven't already signed up, our e-newsletters are a great way to keep up to date with the latest information (<https://www.york.gov.uk/form/EmailUpdates>)

In the meantime, I hope that the final few weeks of home schooling before the summer holidays go well. Thank you again.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Cuthbertson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Councillor Ian Cuthbertson,
Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education City of York Council**